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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, September 11, 1933.

U. S. Department of Agr.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "Breadcrumb Uses." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, USDA.

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Cousin Susan came out of the kitchen the other day and announced to Uncle Ebenezer that of all women's trials and tribulations, she believed kitchen left-overs were the most aggravating.

"Little odds and ends of this or that good food, you know, Ebenezer. They are enough to bother any thrifty woman. You have to be continually thinking up ways to use them, new dishes to disguise them."

Uncle Ebenezer looked sympathetic and inquired what the special trouble was.

"A lot of hard stale bread and also some crusts left from sandwiches."

Uncle Ebenezer scratched his bald head thoughtfully. "Why not give those crusts to little Alice? She's always wishing for curly hair. It's certainly too late for me to do anything about it. There, there, Susan. Don't be testy. Let me have my little joke now and then. Stale bread is the problem in hand, you say? Well, now even if I'm nothing but a mere man, I can think up a lot of good dishes from bread crumbs. What about that elegant bread crumb cake you used to make? What about apple or peach betty for dessert? What about all those good scalloped dishes? What about meat loaf or salmon loaf made with bread crumbs? What about croquettes? What about stuffings for meat and vegetables -- chicken stuffing or stuffing for peppers or tomatoes? Oh, yes, and what about those old-fashioned breadcrumb batter cakes for breakfast? Then, what about bread pudding with raisins or blueberry bread pudding? There's quite a list already."

Cousin Susan started for the kitchen. "Who'd ever think to look at you, Ebenezer, that you had such a good memory or took such notice of what's set before you at the table?"

The Recipe Lady agrees with Uncle Ebenezer in his suggestions for using bread crumbs. In fact, she says bread crumbs come in so handy in the kitchen that she could hardly cook without them. Only the chronic pessimists like our Cousin Susan sigh over bread left-overs. In these days with bread prices high, no crumbs should go to waste.

Four main ways to use bread crumbs. First, to thicken many mixtures. You can use crumbs in place of flour to make a delicious bread crumb cake, and also battercakes and waffles. You can use crumbs in many steamed and baked puddings and in souffles. And you can use them to thicken meat patties or meat or fish loaves. Second, you can use bread crumbs in stuffing -- stuffing for meat or fowl or fish or vegetables. Third, you can use crumbs for what the Recipe Lady calls a "finish" for scalloped dishes. And finally, you can use fine crumbs as a coating for croquettes, tomato slices or eggplant slices for frying or to coat ham for baking.

But here's an idea that perhaps you've never heard. Different dishes call for bread crumbs prepared in different ways. Soft, fine, fluffy crumbs from the inside of the loaf are good for stuffing and for coating baked hams. Crumbs toasted a delicate brown and buttered are the best for fruit betty. Medium dry crumbs are best for baked dishes.

Now a word about making stuffing. Many stuffings, especially for fowl, are heavy, tasteless and soggy. Use the right kind of bread crumbs and you'll have light, well-seasoned and dry stuffing. Use bread that is at least two days old. Cut the loaf in half and pull the soft bread from the crust with a fork. Then with the tips of the fingers, pull the large pieces of bread into light, fluffy, but fine crumbs. The seasoning will blend more evenly with fine crumbs and the stuffing will be light and fluffy.

For coating croquettes you need fine, dry white bread crumbs from the inside of the loaf. Avoid bread crusts for this purpose. They become too brown in frying. You can dry your left-over bread in a slow oven. Then roll out the crumbs until very fine and even. Or grate or grind them, if you prefer, but sift them in either case. By the way, when you grind dry bread in your meat grinder, use the fine knife. If you hold a paper bag over the end, that will catch any crumbs that might fly.

Bread crumbs are especially convenient and economical in extending flavor. For example, suppose you have a small amount of chopped meat. Combine it with crumbs and seasonings. The bread will take up the flavor and prevent the meat from packing too closely. In that way, you can make a small amount of meat go farther. The same is true of desserts, made with fruit or chocolate or some other distinctive flavor. The crumbs take up the flavor. But remember not to use so many crumbs that they "swamp" the flavor you are trying to extend.

Now a word about keeping bread crumbs, before we stop to plan our menu. Be sure your crumbs are entirely dry before you put them in a jar for storage. Many people toast the crumbs or dry them out both before and after grinding them in the meat chopper. You'll often find it a saving to prepare a lot of crumbs at a time. But unless they are thoroughly dry they are likely to mold. Also, if you put them up in a tight, airless container like a covered jar or can, they are likely to become stale. Better keep them in a jar with clean cheesecloth stretched over the top. That will protect them from dust yet let the air reach them. You can hold the cheesecloth on with a rubber band. Or you can stretch it between two embroidery hoops. That makes a handy cover. Some people keep breadcrumbs in paper bags.

Now then, let's get at this Monday menu. Let's plan an inexpensive, easy oven meal, featuring a bread crumb dish and garden vegetables. All right. The main dish is stuffed eggplant -- a fine way to use up bread crumbs as well as cooked vegetables you may have on hand. The stuffing is bread crumbs seasoned with crisp pork, pork fat and left-over vegetables like beans and peas.

Well, then, the menu: Stuffed eggplant; Baked potatoes; Toasted rolls; Baked pears; and Coffee. An easy, inexpensive oven meal, you see, which features one very good vegetable-and-bread-crumbs-dish. If you'll come with pencil in hand tomorrow, I'll give you that stuffed eggplant recipe.

Tomorrow: "Home Dyeing."

